

2014

Ars Poetica

Troy Jollimore

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/bpr>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jollimore, Troy (2014) "Ars Poetica," *Birmingham Poetry Review*. Vol. 41, Article 41.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/bpr/vol41/iss2014/41>

This content has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the UAB Digital Commons, and is provided as a free open access item. All inquiries regarding this item or the UAB Digital Commons should be directed to the [UAB Libraries Office of Scholarly Communication](#).

Troy Jollimore

Ars Poetica

I'm not in very much pain these days
is a terrible way to start a poem
because the poet's pain is what puts the asses
in the seats, it's the half-nude neon
lady on the sign outside
the strip club, it's the guy with the big
yellow twirling arrow outside the furniture
store, and without the poet's pain,
what do you have? Some pretty words
about barn swallows and oleanders,
some standard verses re: lovely lakes
and the midnight water laps softly, peace
sneaking up behind you on tender cat pads,
etc., etc.... The poet's pain
is his bread and butter, his keys to the kingdom,
his ace in the hole. It's what you take away
from him when it's the last act and you really
want to grind his pathetic rhyme-spitting face
in the gravel. It's what the world has gifted
him, and damn him if he won't carry it
out of the kitchen on a big
precariously balanced silver platter, furiously
steaming. No one needs, or wants, or should
be asked to tolerate a happy poet.
I'm feeling fine, the therapy is going well
are words that should never appear
in a poem. The game cannot be won
and will be called on account of darkness.
Our rhymes whack away at the world like hatchets
thrown into a dead wet stump. No wonder
so many people keep dying, what

with all the elegies we keep writing.
Let's take a break, some suggest. Yes,
but poetry makes nothing happen, and so
can hardly be blamed for this. Would
that this were true. Would that people would stop
beginning sentences that aren't questions
with the word 'would.' You might as well just
wear a billboard around your neck that says
I'm a poet, come fondle my sensitive soul,
lick my barbaric yawp, for I know
what the songs have promised me. Actually,
I never found out what the songs had intended
to promise me. I only know
that I never received it. Was someone supposed
to take me aside at some point and whisper it
into my ear? Or write it on
the underside of a cup of coffee
that got served to me somewhere? Is there still
a chance that this might happen?
Tell the gods, tell the singers of songs,
tell the ghosts that I'm ready.